

Rule 400.5105c Group size for preschool children.

(3) Montessori programs accredited by Association Montessori International (AMI) or American Montessori Society (AMS), may have mixed age groups of children 3 to 6 years of age in the same room, or well-defined space, with a maximum group size of 35.

As representatives of the Michigan Montessori Society, we would like to express our appreciation of the fact that provision has been made in the proposed rules for a maximum class size of 35 in Montessori preschool classrooms.

All of our classes are composed of a three year mixed age group. We do not segregate children by age. This allows them to learn through observation and imitation of their peers.

... research clearly shows that children learn by imitation, that they do so quite early, and that they may be particularly apt to imitate just-older peers. Montessori education apparently capitalizes on imitative learning in both the academic and social realms. It does so by using hands-on materials, by how lessons are given, by having three-year age groupings and by having large classes. . .¹

In our multi-age classrooms, a child can work with older children in one subject, younger children in another, and still have social interaction with children his or her own age. This allows the children to work at their own level and not be confined to work that the adult chooses and that may not be appropriate to the individual's needs. Younger children observe older children and easily learn from them; older children reinforce the knowledge they have attained by helping younger children. As Maria Montessori said, "There is nothing that makes you learn more than teaching it yourself."

It is vital to our philosophy that children have a large number of multi-age peers to work with in the classroom.

The Michigan Montessori Society has 29 affiliated schools. These schools are concentrated in the metropolitan Detroit area. There are many more Montessori schools than this in the state. In order to affiliate with our organization, schools must have an AMI, AMS, or a MACTE trained teacher in each classroom, they must have a full set of Montessori materials in each class, and they must require the children to attend 5 days a week. Because these requirements are similar to

¹ Angeline Stoll Lillard. *Montessori The Science Behind the Genius*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2005, p. 203.

the accreditation standards of AMI and AMS, we would like to ask that consideration be given to designating that a school's affiliation with the Michigan Montessori Society meets your requirement for class size.

We know that there are many well run Montessori schools with qualified staff that do not affiliate with either of the two national organizations. The reason is generally that the process is expensive. If the proposed rules are passed as is and our schools are required to be accredited with AMI or AMS, we ask that a time frame be inserted into the rules. It takes roughly two years to fulfill the accreditation requirements.